

critical digest

305 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.
MU 2-0328 T. M. KRAUS

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New York Theatre Week

Thieves' Carnival-Cherry Lane 2/1/55. Proscenium Productions presents Lucienne Hill's adaption of Jean Anouilh's play. With William LeMassena, Stuart Vaughan, and Thomas Carlin, directed by Warren Enters...The Wisteria Trees-City Center 2/2/55. NYC Theatre Company presents revival of Losh Logan's adaption of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" with Helen Hayes, Ella Raines, Walter Matthau, staged by John Stix...The Southwest Corner-Holiday 2/3/55. John Huntington presents a new play by John Cecil Holm based on novel by Mildred Walker. With Eva Le Gallienne, Enid Markey, and Parker Fennelly, directed by George Schaefer.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Plain and Fancy-Hellinger 1/27/55. Unanimous approval, but with a wide degree of appreciation, was voiced by NY daily critics for Joseph Stein-Will Glickman musical based on Amish people. Barbara Cook, Shirl Conway, Gloria Marlowe, Richard Derr, Nancy Andrews and Stefan Schnabel shared plaudits of critics. Times and Herald Tribune aisle men expressed mild pros, former fearing an excess of Broadway showmanship in midst of Pennsylvania Dutch musical almost ruined it. While Kerr, Herald Tribune, billed it as sweet, attractive and normal as blueberry pie. On the warmer side, News critic praised it as engaging, intelligent and handsome. He had to agree with colleagues that Albert Hague's score was so-so. On the rave side Coleman, Mirror, cheered it as one of the most original musicals in many a season, with the best of everything. Raoul Pene Dubois costumes and sets were cheered by all. Tuneful, sprightly, musical and one at which everyone seems to be having a good time, bills McClain, Journal American. Engaging also was term Watts, Post, used to describe new musical produced by Richard Kollmar and James Gardiner.

The Grand Prize-Lyceum 1/26/55. News and Journal American critics alone in enjoying Ronald Alexander's new comedy presented by Shepard Traube. Chapman, News, listed it as a pleasant, cheerful, aimable comedy, while McClain, Journal American, vent out on a limb and predicted show would be a "winner. He noted that though effort is on the thin side, ridden with many a reminiscent situation and line, it adds up to an aimable and unpretentious evening of a show the author will make alot of money on. Con critics generally liked cast members June Lockhart, John Newland and Tom Posten. They even admitted some of the lines were funny. But most agreed with Atkinson, Times, that author forgot to write a play. Kerr, Herald Tribune, didn't think show witty enough to chatter as much as it does. Coleman, Mirror, reported that first nighters enjoyed show, but he thought it just didn't fit. Intermittent and mechanical little antic, panned Watts, Post. Plot development is simply not very interesting, sums up Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun.

Passion of Gross-De Lys 1/22/55- NY daily critics just didn't like Harold Leavitt's new play presented by Arthur Langer-Bernard Lubar. Hawkins, WT&S, summed up the view of the 4 daily men who overred. A bad dream, he noted, was had by all. Display ad after opening invited "admittedly few who will be excited by this kind of theatre."

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 ' Off Broadway '
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The Immortal Husband, a comedy by James Merrill, is next play at Theatre De Lys, due Feb 15. Herbert Machiz will direct. ...June and the Paycock opens at Greenwich Mews Feb 12...Ring Theatre will present original plays at 9th Av & 28th St on week ends...Strindberg's Countess Julia and Sudermann's Fareway Princess will be presented week-ends at Davenport Theatre...Shoestring Revue moved opening date to Feb 25 ay President...Thomas Davis Irish Players present St John Ervine's Boyd's Shop will be presented week-ends at Masters Institute Theatre...Shakespearewrights will present Merchant of Venice Feb 22 at Jan Hus House.

Caravan Theatre sails Feb 11 for 10 week cruise with S.S.Homerio to present stock company on ship. Fred Carmichael and Patricia Lyn Rose producers .

Drama Forum, project of Ray Yates, returns to Greenwich Village for weekly readings of new dramas. Meetings will be held at Provincetown Theatre on Thursdays.

Broadway Chapel Players' Noah was tabbed a shortened and much amended version of Obey's play by Hewes, Saturday Review. But he felt it serves very well as a half sermon, half narrative in a church setting.

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 ' Vaudeville '
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New Palace show is headed by Steve Evans, Claude Marchant & Kathleen Stanford, Lew Black & Pat Dudge, Walter Walters, Jr, Russ & Joy Sobey, and Lugosi Trio.

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 ' Theatre Film Notes '
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20th Century Fox have bought screen rights to Bus Stop...Warner Brothers have bought screen rights to Bad Seed...Deborah Kerr will portray Anna in 20th Century Fox "The King and I"... "Fanny" producers reported to have rejected \$500,000 offer from Paramount for screen rights.

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 ' Futures '
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WISTERIA TREES	City Center	Feb 2
SOUTHWEST CORNER	Holiday	Feb 3
DARK IS LIGHT EN	ANTA	Feb 9
DESPERATE HOUSE	Barrymore	Feb 10
JUNE & PAYCOCK	Greenwich M	Feb 12
GRASS IN GREEN	Downtown N.	Feb 16
TONIGHT IN SAMARK	Morocco	Feb 17
WAYARD SAINT		Feb 17?
BAMBOO CROSS	Blackfriars	Feb 21
MEN OF VENICE	Jan Hus	Feb 22
SHOESTRING REVUE	Imperial	Feb 24
SHOESTRING REVUE	President	Feb 28
BUS STOP		Mar 2
THREE FOR TONIGHT	Music Box	Mar 21
CAT ON HOT TIN ROOF	Morocco	Mar 24
ANKLES AWEIGH	Hellinger	Apr 14

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 ' Theatre Book Comments '
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"The Lady of Fashion-The Life and Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt" by Eric Wollencott Barnes (Scribners) was okayed as an interesting biography by Krutch, Times, and Down, Variety. Former predicts readers will be surprised how interesting the story of actress can be made. Latter billed it as an eminently readable, yet authoritative book.

"The Dramatic Event" by Eric Bentley (Horizon) was panned by Variety's book mugg. New Republic's critic's essays cannot be sustained in the book form. Book critic is not clear what audience drama critic seeks. Book also is in bad need of proof reading.

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 ' CD New Service \$25 Year '
 * Charter Subscription Offer '
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"CD" new expanded service which will include critic & ticket data on NY & out of town shows, plus the new weekly printed with photos and sketches will start shortly present subscribers at \$10 rate who subscribe to expanded service at \$25 rate before publication will receive a spring binder FREE to hold copies of C.D.

Name

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Green	Room	Department
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DEFYING CRITICS...Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, who filed a lone pro notice for Festival, is glad to see someone with the courage to fight a lackadaisical reception from the press. Nobody thinks it is healthy to have reviews mean absolute life and death to a play. The only cure for that condition, critic notes, is for someone like Bella Spewack to get mad and act. Co-author told Torre, WT&S, that she don't see how Broadway, with its ancient theatres and equipment, can be called the theatre capital of the world.

COLUMN TIPS...Merry Porter, Fanny, is the daughter of a Yale professor, notes Winchell...George White planning a new Scandals for the spring, hears Walker...A well known actor, on the wagon for over a year, went off and wound up battling in an 8th Ave bar, reports Kilgallen.

HOW TO GET TIX-CONTINUED...Bartender friend of McClain, Journal American, sees all the hits and never pays premium prices. He merely goes to show after its opening and asks for two tickets in the middle inside the tenth row any time within the next couple of months..

CRITICAL THOUGHTS ...Saroyan's Love's Old Sweet Song is a play Watts, Post, would like to see again...Why can't playwrights let the seamier side of things be nice and seamy, leaving the sweetness and light out of it, asks Kerr, Herald Tribune... Authors rarely believe in their own work as much as Bella Spewack, who reportedly put \$6000 of her own into Festival, notes Peper, WT&S.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Helen Hayes told Fields, Mirror, that she has come to resent the intrusion of acting in her personal life. But there is a chance she may be in the new play her husband, Charles MacArthur, is now writing.

DRAMA DESK MEETING..."Theatre Behind the Iron Curtain" was discussed by NY Times Russian correspondent Harrison Salisbury at Drama Desk January meeting. The reporter predicted a tremendous reception if American groups, such as Porgy and Bess, played in Russia. With easing of travel regulations he thought that such a request might be granted. Moscow has 23 theatre companies who present 350 plays per year. Plays are 1/3 pre revolutionary, 1/3 foreign, and 1/3 modern Soviet. Actors are a privileged class, with greater access to consumer goods than the average citizen. Admission prices range downward from \$4 and are filled nightly. Sex is never a subject nor a part of Russian theatre. Plays on modern subjects are extra careful never to offend government policies, which may change from day to day. This makes both playwrighting and drama criticism dangerous jobs.

Pros & Cons	by	TMK
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Plain and Fancy is a lively, colorful musical comedy that would be even better if pruned of some alien elements. Un-Amish carnival scene is out of place, as are several Broadway type gags. Otherwise bright show is a delight. Barbara Cook and Gloria Marlowe especially are wonderful good. Bright colors and bright youngsters make up for obvious weakness of score.

The double standard drama critics and drama editors operate under would drive the average newspaperman mad. If a given show continues in the face of bad notices the show is "defying" the reviewers. But the drama editors (often the same person as the critic) is the writer who informs the public of the defying. Mrs. Spewack, you can't have it both ways.

A "Salute to France" six week program will be presented in Paris starting May 19 sponsored by the International Exchange Program of the US State Department, and ANTA. A production of Oklahoma, Judith Anderson in Medea... a revival of The Skin of Our Teeth will be presented in the drama, music, and... program. Robert Schnitzer is general manager of the series.

Plays

Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof... March 24 at Morosco... Tonight in Samarkand will precede show at Morosco on... Festival polled its audience on how they enjoyed show, favorite drama critic, and other data... Ten Above Zero revue will be presented by Stanley Prager, Puma Game, in March at Barbizon Plaza... Too Late the Phalarope will be presented by Mary K Frank.

Players

Marjorie Lord replaced Kitty Carlisle in Anniversary Waltz... George Kaufman and Leueen MacGrath have withdrawn from Silk Stockings, Abe Burrows will be billed as co-author... Pearl Bailey sings a new Harold Arlen-Michael Brown song in House of Flowers entitled "I'm an Indoor Girl"... Jan Farrand picked to replace Felicia Montalegre in Tonight in Samarkand... John C Wilson will direct Seventh Heaven... Ethel Barrymore exhibit at Museum of City of NY open daily.

Survey Dept.

NY theatre fans attend 8 Broadway shows per year, while out of town visitors who come to NY for shows attend 5½ shows per year, Playbill survey details. Survey made last March revealed that 70% of fans checked lived in NY commuting area.

Summer Playhouses

Melody Fair musical tent theatre to be set up at College, NY, near Albany, by Myron Weinberg, Ed Greenberg and Seymour Krawitz. Opera... start June 10 with Showboat.

Other Broadways

Porgy and Bess won another rousing reception from press and fans in Tel Aviv... Katharine Hepburn will tour Australia for 6 weeks with Old Vic Company playing Portia in Merchant of Venice, Katharina in Taming of the Shrew, and Isabella in Measure for Measure... Court Square Theatre, Springfield, Mass, built in 1892, to be demolished and converted into office space.

CRITICAL DIGEST
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